

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Peaceful Paths Celebrates 50 years of Service to the Tri-County Region

Safety and support to adult and child survivors of Domestic Violence remains the mission

www.peacefulpaths.org

GAINESVILLE – Peaceful Paths began its mission in the Gainesville area in March of 1974 as the Rape Information and Counseling Service (RICS), a grassroots organization that was formed to fight against sexual violence. Key local women and men, including pioneers like Fern Nix, Martha Varnes, Janet Presley Larson, Judy Levy, Margaret Parrish, and Harvey Budd, pushed to create services that would keep victims safe when systems offered little protection. In 1976, RICS began to expand its services to include battered women, and in 1977, established a spouse abuse hotline. In September of that year the agency incorporated, the name was changed to the Sexual and Physical Abuse Resource Center to better reflect the changing mission. In January of 1978, SPARC was granted a lease on a shelter site and the shelter opened with its first client on March 30 of that year. In 2000, the agency was rebranded as Peaceful Paths Domestic Abuse Network, Inc. to better reflect the mission to serve survivors of domestic violence and their children.

Over the past 50 years, Peaceful Paths has worked to develop comprehensive residential and outreach programs that save lives and create change for survivors. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) remains a critical issue in the Alachua, Bradford, and Union County region served by the agency, with over 2500 victims identified annually by law enforcement, child welfare, and other partners in the community. Services are free, confidential, and trauma-informed. Using an empowerment -based model, we work with every survivor where they are to offer safety, support, and a path to self-sufficiency.

Dr. Theresa Beachy, Executive Director, stated: “Peaceful Paths reaching the 50-year anniversary is a milestone achievement that we should celebrate as a community. The fact that we exist and have ongoing impact in this community is a gift. The impact that we have been able to make on survivors since the opening of the shelter in 1978 (over 9200 people in Shelter, more than 40,000 in Outreach) is immeasurable. We are all part of a legacy of hope started by concerned feminist activists, including the first female law enforcement officers in our community like Fern Nix, and we are proud of our Legacy of Hope and the work that we do every day to save lives and create change.”

Sally Ryden, Board Chair stated: “ I am honored to serve on the Peaceful Paths Board, and am optimistic that the 50th anniversary events will increase community awareness of our mission and the scope of the domestic violence problem, as well as our excellent programs to help and give hope to survivors.”

Joe Johnson, longest serving Board member stated: “Since the mother and my 2 children was a victim of Domestic Violence and losing her life in 1989 leaving my kids without their mother, I have been a very strong advocate and supporter of this issue and proudly serving on this board for over 26 years. Thanks to the great service of the amazing staff, Peaceful Paths has become one of Florida's most recognized agencies for the work being done for Domestic Violence. Collaboration is what it takes for success and that is something that is being done well in the communities served by Peaceful Paths.

Alachua County Sheriff Emery Gainey stated: “The partnership between Peaceful Paths and the Alachua County Sheriff's Office is crucial in ensuring that victims have a safe and secure environment to seek shelter and support as they navigate the challenges of domestic violence. This collaboration not only offers a lifeline to those in need but also underscores the importance of community support and coordinated efforts in addressing such critical issues. Congratulations to Peaceful Paths on this significant milestone, and to many more years of making a positive impact in the lives of those affected by domestic violence.”

Brian Kramer, State Attorney, Eighth Judicial Circuit stated: “On behalf of the State Attorney’s Office, I want thank Peaceful Paths for their 50 years of service to Alachua, Bradford and Union Counties. Successful prosecution and prevention of incidents of domestic violence cannot happen in a

vacuum. My office relies heavily on the services provided by Peaceful Paths. Their team's wide programming from prevention, support, and advocacy to training and education are invaluable to their clients, law enforcement, and prosecutors alike. I personally want to thank the Dr. Beachy, this organization and their team for what I know are countless lives saved over the last 50 years in the Eighth Judicial Circuit."

The best measure of the impact is the words of survivors who go on to live the life they choose free of fear, control and violence: "I am beyond grateful for the last year I have spent with Peaceful Paths, and all the healing and growth I have accomplished with your help. I have found a wonderful place to call home. Here's to new beginnings!" ~ *Survivor in residential services*

To celebrate this milestone, Peaceful Paths is presenting a public exhibition of artwork unlike any in our community. Using loaned works from local artists, collectors, survivors, and youth makers, "**Hope Works: A Celebration of Peaceful Paths 50 Years of Saving Lives and Creating Change**" will help us generate awareness, allies, and donors to raise \$150,000 toward agency investment in our Legacy of Hope. Visit our website for all the information on participating in this unique event:

www.peacefulpaths.org/hopeworks

You will be able to experience this unique show from April 5-May 5, 2024 at the Peaceful Paths Outreach Office in Gainesville. Throughout the exhibit, a Tree of Hope Mural will be created in our main lobby, featuring the donors and sponsors for the exhibit. On May 5 2024, we will hold the Closing Night for the main exhibit, and the Tree of Hope Mural will be revealed. Survivor artworks will remain open for viewing through October 2024. During the show, we will host private tours, community gatherings, and highlight the Amazing Give event. Your presence and support will make on the difference as we build a Legacy of Hope.

Below is a yearly snapshot of services provided in 2023:

Total Survivors Served In Person	2251
New People Served for the First Time	1935
Total Services Provided	56,257
Total Helpline Calls	2608
High Risk Calls	837
Safe Housing Nights on Campus	14,568
Safe Nights in the Community	39,398
Shelter Residents	411
Shelter Pets	23
Supportive Housing Residents	38
Permanent Housing Residents	165
Children and Youth Served in the Community	8105
Children and Youth Served in Intervention Programs	484
Total Value of Financial Assistance to Survivors	\$223,612
Legal Clients Served	828
Injunction Services Provided	616

For more information on the agency or how you can be an ally in our work, please contact Dr. Theresa Beachy at 352-377-5690 or visit us on the web at www.peacefulpaths.org

We exist to save lives and create change.

